



The Living Form of Genre: A Study of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* in the Light of Genre Theory by John Frow

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ABSTRACT

Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen is a famous novel, which captures the attention of readers through its plot and narrative structure. There is a lot of work available on this novel including on its Marxist, Feminist and structural perspectives, but there is inadequate research available on the exploration of its genre structure. By qualitatively employing Catherine Belsey's textual analysis, this study aims to apply John Frow's Genre theory on the selected novel to identify its generic structures. This study suggests that genre is not only a classification but a living system of social and literary practice. The selected novel highlights these conventions by its narrative, plot, and characters. Furthermore, the study opens the new way for interpretation of literature from the generic point of view.

1. Introduction

Structuralism, Structuralism, as a critical approach, was developed during the early twentieth century as a way of explaining cultural phenomena including literature in terms of underlying systems and structures, like language, narrative, and form. According to structuralist critics, meaning in a literary text has neither to do with the intention of the author nor the reaction of the reader but with the conventions and relationships that lie beneath the text and structure it (Culler, 1975). Genre is one of the most significant aspects of consultation because in structuralism, it is considered one of the frameworks in which literary works can be classified, analyzed and interpreted regarding each other. In literary theory, genre is the grouping of works of literature based on common characteristics, style, and common themes. Genres as dynamic systems which change with cultural and literary change should not be viewed as hard and fast categories. Northop Frye (1957) perceives genre as a bigger literary form where readers and writers can identify common conventions and expectations in literary works. In the same way, John Frow (2006) conception of genre is not based on a label or a taxonomic category but as a system of conventional and highly structured restrictions to the production and interpretation of meaning (p. 10). All these academic views point to the fact that genre is both a structural and interpretive device in that it determines how literature is created, read and comprehended.

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One of the most renowned novels in the English literature is *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen (1813). It is the tale of Elizabeth Bennet, a willful young lady who must grapple with matters of love, status and societal standing in early nineteenth century England. The novel begins with the well-known quote, “it is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife”, which instantly gives us an idea of the wit and the social commentary to be found in the novel. The complexity of its historical era is combined with timeless appeal due to the focus on human character and emotion, and the intricacy of the human character is conveyed through the author in its manner, family relations and moral principles (Butler, 1997). This can be further elaborated by reference to the genre theory as proposed by John Frow where the genre is not a necessary means to classify but to arrange the meaning incident in culture. Genres, Frow (2006) maintains, are cultural patterns that define expectations and interpretation habits of the readers. With the help of this theoretical lens, we can observe how the story is wound around the existing norms of her era, and sometimes even flouts them in this way, making the text itself a statement and a commentary on the literary and social conventions of the day.

1.1. Problem Statement

Genre has often been viewed merely as a container for categorizing literary texts into predefined types based on shared characteristics. This conventional understanding tends to limit the dynamic and interactive nature of genre in shaping meaning and reader interpretation. Although *Pride and Prejudice* has been extensively studied from various critical and thematic perspectives. Despite this, there is a noticeable gap as the novel is not studied from the perspective of its genre. Thereby, this study aims to explore genre structures in the novel by using John Frow's Genre theory to challenge traditional conceptions of genre as fixed and rigid. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of genre functioning in literary interpretations.

1.2. Aim and Objectives

This research aims to identify generic structures in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* by applying John Frow's Genre Theory. There is limited research available on the exploration of generic structures in the selected novel.

- To explore the genre as a social practice in *Pride and Prejudice*.
- To identify the genre as an evolving system in the selected novel.

1.3. Research Questions

1. How does the novel reflect genre as a social practice?
2. How does the novel illustrate Frow's idea of genre as an evolving system?

2. Literature Review

Structuralism is based on the concepts of Ferdinand de Saussure (1916), who considered language as a system of signs where the meaning is created based on difference but not value. His theory of langue and parole laid down the principle that any language and by extension, literature, is ordered by rules of meaning. Later critics based on this linguistic model looked at literature not as the output of the individual but rather as an output of systems and conventions (Saussure, 1916). Claude Levi-Strauss (1963) applied to the anthropological and mythological concerns the linguistic structuralism of Saussure and argued that myths, cultural narratives, are structured in terms of universal mental structures. His method proposed that human stories had some profound common recurrent patterns, and this supported the structuralist assumption that meaning grew out of underlying systems that shared by all societies (Levi-Strauss, 1963).

Roland Barthes (1977) took structuralism a step further into the literary criticism by focusing on the text itself rather than the intention of the author. In his essay the death of the author, Barthes proposed that language and codes of culture created meaning as opposed to expressing oneself. His work turned the focus to the issue of control of the author to that of the reader where he has to decode structures entrenched in language (Barthes, 1977). These concepts were furthered by Jonathan Culler (1975), who came up with the concept of literary competence in Structuralist Poetics. He opined that readers will be able to draw meaning through the knowledge of their perception of literary conventions which are like rules of language. This strengthened the structuralist concept that literature is a system which has conventions that may be identified by the writer and the reader (Culler, 1975).

Roman Jakobson (1960) also helped to advance structuralism with his model of linguistic communication which categorizes the language according to the sounds, rhythm, parallelism, and rhyme structure. The framework developed by Jakobson explained the role of manner and structure in determining the meaning of literature, making his work a cornerstone in future

advancements within the theory of genres and narratives (Jakobson, 1960). One of the first critics to develop genre into a structuralist model was Northrup Frye (1957). He also suggested that literature is an organized pattern of recurrent myths and archetypes in the book *Anatomy of Criticism*. To Frye, genres are cyclic and universal and mirror recurring modes of human experience. His structural move placed genre as a fundamental structuring principle of literary tradition (Frye, 1957).

Tzvetan Todorov (1976) took this model of Frye and modified it, explaining genre as a moving system, but not a definite category. In his work "*The Origin of Genres*", Todorov proposed that genres are developed in transformation and a combination according to historical and cultural developments. He also came up with the concept that genres serve as horizons of expectations, which assist readers in understanding literary works in pre-existing frames (Todorov, 1976). Debate on Genre was further developed by Alastair Fowler (1982) who focused on flexibility. In her book *Kinds of Literature*, Fowler has explained genres as families of texts that are not separated by strict boundaries but are related in some way. His model embodied a post-structuralist perception of genre as being relational and adaptively based and retained the structuralist stress on systems but admitted of the possibility of evolutionary and overlapping (Fowler, 1982).

Mikhail Bakhtin (1986) looked at genre through the dialogic lens. His argument was that genres represent social discourse and ideology as genres represented a channel of mediating individual creativity and collective culture. Genre, to Bakhtin, is not just structural but also social, created in the process of intermingling of voices, contexts and ideologies in a particular historical moment (Bakhtin, 1986). One of the first to analyze the craft of Jane Austen structurally and stylistically was Mary Lascelles (1939). In *Jane Austen and Her Art*, she also drew attention to her expert use of form, dialogue and irony in her novels, the way her novels combine romantic conventions with moral and social commentary. The work by Lascelles places the book of *Pride and Prejudice* in the realist and romantic traditions (Lascelles, 1939).

Marilyn Butler (1997) has considered the moral philosophy of Enlightenment as applied to the story of *Pride and Prejudice*. In *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*, she held that the fiction of Austen has an intellectual bite in it, especially the conflict between reason and feeling. Butler discussed Austen as a moral realist who utilized the conventions of the genre to address ethical and political issues (Butler, 1997). Tony Tanner (1986) evaluated the formalism of the structure of the narrative of *Pride and Prejudice*, its involvement in irony and repetition to create meaning. He has observed how symmetrical narrative design and repetition of the themes of pride, prejudice and misunderstanding achieved by Austen create coherence in the text and hence the structuralist focus on pattern and opposition (Tanner, 1986).

Claudia L. Johnson (1990) discussed how Austen plays upon the conventions of the genres by suggesting that *Pride and Prejudice* push the limits of social and gender conventions of the romantic and conduct novel genres. Her work highlighted the political ambiguity of Austen and how she was able to redefine the morality talk of the era by altering the narrative structure (Johnson, 1990). D. A. Miller (1981) came to a narratological and ideological interpretation of *Pride and Prejudice*. In *Narrative and Its Discontents*, he studied how the ending and unity of the novel represents the societal and disciplinary framework of one hundred and nineteenth-century England. His reading connects the formal accuracy of Austen to the ideological structures her work expresses and attacks (Miller, 1981).

With the introduction of structural, post-structural, and cultural approaches, John Frow (2006) manages to transform the context of modern genre theory. Frow in his book *Genre* described genre as a group of resources of communication which structure culture production and reception. His argument was that a genre is not a title but a construct that determines how the texts are produced, received and dispersed in society (Frow, 2006). The contribution of Rick Altman (1999) in the book, *Film/Genre*, was a complementary viewpoint that the genre is a process involving interaction between the industry, text and viewers. Even though Altman is a film theorist, his model proves helpful in supporting the idea proposed by Frow, that genre is, in fact, a process of negotiation, but not a fixed category. His writing aids in the extension of genre theory beyond the literary field, which strengthens its cultural and communicative aspects (Altman, 1999).

The scholarship under consideration shows that there is an ongoing theoretical debate between structuralism, genre theory, and the analysis of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. The study of literature as a relationship system laid the groundwork of structuralism, whereas the genre theory applied this approach to describe the functioning of texts in both the cultural and formal structures. The work by Austen is a fruitful illustration of the interaction of structural and generic conventions to create meaning. John Frow's contributions unify these traditions by positioning genre as both a structural and cultural mechanism that shapes production, interpretation, and social understanding. Together, these studies reveal genre as a living, evolving structure central to both literary form and cultural expression.

3. Research Methodology

This paper uses a qualitative research method along with the textual analysis of Catherine Belsey to interpret the text of *Pride and Prejudice* based on the genre theory by John Frow. Qualitative research is specifically well adapted to literature study in

that it focuses on interpretation, meaning-making and situational comprehension as opposed to quantification (Creswell, 2013). Such a method allows to read the text in more detail and investigate the way the genre conventions work and interact with other thematic and stylistic aspects to create a perception and a response of the readers. The primary text source to be used in this research is *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen published in 1813. The novel is used as a prime text in which the structures of genres and meanings in texts are analyzed. The secondary sources, such as scholarly articles, critical essays, and books that are relevant to this study are also consulted to put findings in perspective and substantiate interpretive statements.

3.1. Theoretical Framework

Dialogism and Heteroglossia in Literary Theory

John Frow maintains that genre is not a system of classification of texts but a constitutive system in that it determines the production, circulation and reception of texts. Genres in his opinion are social and cultural practices that order meaning and communication.

Genre as a System of Meaning

Frow understands genre as a system of traditional and highly structured limitations on the creation and perception of meaning (Frow, 2006, p. 10). Genre is not a mere category, especially since it serves as a horizon of expectation that helps the reader and the writer to interpret the type of text under consideration.

Genre as a Social Institution

Frow points out that genres are not stable literary forms but social institutions that are dynamic. They act as systems by which the social knowledge and ideology are articulated and recreated. He says, "*Genres are not simply forms. They are forms of life, ways of being in the world*" (Frow, 2006, p. 2). Therefore, it is not only that genre dictates the structure of a text but also the role, identity and relation of the discourse participants.

Intertextuality and Transformation

Frow points out that any genre is always intertextual in nature: that is, it exists in a relationship with other genres. Generic conventions are constantly borrowed, mixed and altered in texts. As he notes, "*Genres overlap, merge, and interpenetrate each other; they are always in process, always being redefined*" (Frow, 2006, p. 25). This renders genre as a dynamic system which responds to cultural and historical shifts.

Genre and Power

A The connection between genre and power is one of the key components of the theory that Frow puts forward. Genres govern discourse and manage what may be said, who may speak and under what circumstances. This way, they assist in the construction of social seniorities and ideologies. As Frow argues, "*Genre is a function of power, not of taxonomy*" (Frow, 2006, p. 52). This implies that the classification of texts can never be neutral - it has institutional or ideological intentions.

Genre and Interpretation

Genre as an interpretive framework provides readers with expectations that are based on the style, form and meaning. It enables them to read properly forecast patterns and conventions. Frow remarks, "*To read a text as belonging to a genre is to read it in terms of a set of expectations*" (Frow, 2006, p. 75). Therefore, interpretation is impossible without understanding genres.

4. Analysis and Discussion

4.1. Genre as a System of Meaning

In his book *Genre* (2006), John Frow imagines genre not as a category of classification but as a system of meaning that is constitutive of text production, interpretation and reception. He argues that genres are composed of groupings of traditional and deeply structured restrictions to both the creation and reception of meaning (Frow, 2006, p. 10). Genre, therefore, is an example of a semiotic frame, a system of commonly shared codes, expectations, and conventions that restrictively serve to subsume creative production and at the same time to open it up. This concept, when applied to the novel *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen (1813), explains the way in which the meaning of the novel comes not only through plot or character but through how the generic conventions of romantic, realist and domestic fiction are utilized by Austen.

The main conflict of the work by Austen in terms of the novel *Pride and Prejudice* consists in the opposition of personal desire and social order which is also a characteristic thematic issue of the romantic genre. Readers expect courtship, misunderstanding, moral learning and subsequent reconciliation-trappings which Frow sees as a form of constraint, and which incline to interpretation. Austen makes these conventions complex by using irony, wit, and psychological realism. To provide an example, the changing relationship between Elizabeth Bennet and Fitzwilliam Darcy serves as the storytelling tool to explore the issues of class thought, gender roles, and morality. What the easy course of romantic redemption requires is Darcy, unaffected by feeling, being prouder than before, and Elizabeth, prejudiced, being averted to introspection, rearranges an archetypal romance into an ethical and psychological investigation.

The novel by Austen is influential, follows, and challenges the principles of social realism simultaneously. The description of a family life, social events, and conversations, including the Meryton meetings (Ch. 3-5) or the events at Netherfield (Ch. 7-10), offers a realistic image of a real life, placing romance in a morally and socially organized world. However, the path of emotional and moral growth of both Elizabeth and Darcy helps to maintain the emotional aspect of romance. Combining realism and romance, Austen demonstrates the claim of Frow that genre stabilizes and challenges, meaning allowing readers to acknowledge the typical forms and being encouraged to cogitate about the flaws of humanity and social hypocrisy.

Genre structuring role is also shown through linguistic and narratorial decisions made in the novel. The application of the free-indirect discourse (the combination of the third-person narration and the interiority of the characters) allows Austen to allow the readers to grasp the point of view of Elizabeth without losing the authorial irony (Ch. 6, 36, 58). Consider, as an example, the moment when Elizabeth prejudices Darcy too soon in the first proposal (Ch. 34), the reader encounters her subjective misjudgment of social *Pride and Prejudice* at once, as well as the general story-telling critique of social pride and prejudice. This is a method that combines social commentary with emotional reflection and shows that genre does not just exist on the level of theme and structure but also on the level of linguistic style.

Meaning is another aspect of the genre theory that is created by Austen via repetition and variation. Dances, letters, and proposals are examples of recurring motifs that are generic signifiers of courtship stories. However, Austen transforms these tropes into moments of ethical and emotional discovery. The letter which Darcy writes to Elizabeth (Ch. 35) is both a solution and a revelation which discloses the foreshadowing of the romantic immediacy and is a failure. Similarly, the elopement of Lydia Bennet and Wickham (Ch. 46-48) creates a sense of tension and social commentary into the marriage plot, as Austen plays around with the generic conventions in a reflexive way that is aimed at expanding the limits of interpretation.

The mutual interaction between the text, the author and the audience is predicted by Frow through his conception of genre as a processual system. The readers of the time would have recognized the codes of conduct, expectation of matrimony and social stratifications illustrated in the novel, thus, making the events of the novel relevant to them (Ch. 1, 3, 7). However, contemporary readers, in their turn, can approach the text either in a feminist or historical perspective, and thus, reveal the fact that genre has always had the ability to produce new meanings. The blending of romance and realism with moral and social satire by Austen is another example of the fact that, as argued by Frow, genre is dynamic, an arrangement of meaning between changing textual and social conditions (Frow, 2006).

4.2. Genre as a Social Institution

In his contribution to the discussion of genres, John Frow insists that the genres are not only the literary categories but also the social institutions i.e. frameworks representing the cultural norms, values and relations of power. In his assertions, he states that genres are not merely forms. They are modes of existence, means of inhabiting the world (Frow, 2006, p. 2). According to this type of view, the genres have a social logic that influences people in terms of their actions, thoughts, and communication within a cultural context. In its application to the novel of *Pride and Prejudice* (Austen, 1813), the novel itself serves as an output of, and a statement about the social institutions of the early nineteenth-century British society, specifically in the areas of class, gender, and marriage.

To the genre of domestic novels, in which *Pride and Prejudice* belong, is reflected the historical and social context of its creation. The genre is closely connected with the social behavior, morality, and decency, and it represents the ideologies concerning the role of women, their economic reliance, and the need to marry and stay married to live a socially stable life. Austen though challenges these standards in her story. In her, e.g., Elizabeth Bennet does not accept the proposal that women must get married just to gain social status or wealth, and she says no to Mr. Collins, even if they can have social status with this proposal (Ch.

19). The act is an example of the institutional structures of genres controlling and negotiating the limits of social identity as posited by Frow (Frow, 2006).

The plot of marriage, which is the focus of the novel, is a social ceremony, which governs the relationship and builds hierarchies. Such institutional norms as Mrs. Bennet and Charlotte Lucas adhere to: Mrs. Bennet forces her daughters to marry better men (Ch. 3, 7), and Charlotte is opportunistic and marries Mr. Collins to attain her social and economic status (Ch. 22). Conversely, the fact that Elizabeth eventually marries Darcy. It is an example of how one can work out a negotiation of social conventions within the genre constraints: marriage can turn into an act of mutual respect as opposed to a business agreement. Austen reveals the way genre organizes and instigates moral and social demands, as well as ethical and emotive agency, through this opposition.

Another way in which genre mediates social behavior which is exhibited by the patterns of communication is also shown by Austen. The rules of civilized society are reflected in dialogue in the novel, which is full of wit and irony and verbal sparring, as is the case between Elizabeth and Darcy at Netherfield (Ch. 7-10) or between Elizabeth and Lady Catherine at Rosings Park (Ch. 56). Elizabeth is an independent woman in a conversation, which violates the social and gender conventions of a woman, and she can be seen as a character who breaks the social and generic rules. In this way, the domestic realist genre becomes a place of interrelation between literary form and social discourse, through which Austen can criticize the limitations of society and simultaneously be able to follow familiar generic conventions.

The novel also shows the use of genre in determining roles, identities as well as relationships. Elizabeth is a symbol of moral autonomy; Darcy is a symbol of the reformable aristocrat and Lady Catherine de Bourgh is a symbol of strict hierarchy and inherited position (Ch. 56-58). These characters create a miniature of society, through them Austen manages to show how a genre can be a cultural process that perpetuates social processes, as well as challenges them (Frow, 2006, p. 2). These relations between the characters reveal the conflict between the desire and the social norms, and the way in which the genre mediates between ethical and social negotiation.

The fact that genres are social institutions, as the timelessness of the text of *Pride and Prejudice* shows, spans out beyond the text to their culture and relevance to the reader. The romantic and domestic norms that are established in the novel are still present in the modern-day storytelling where the rules of love, marriage, and social status are readjusted to the new generation whether in literary sequels or in contemporary film adaptations of the novel. Those adoptions reiterate the fact that genres are cultural activities that pass meaning through time (Frow, 2006).

In the perspective of Frow, the work of *Pride and Prejudice* comes out not only as a work that explores inherent growth or love but as a social work that reveals the social processes that make relationships, identity, and power possible. Austen access to the domestic genre enables her to comment and contribute towards the moral and ideological constructs of her society and proves that genre is a platform where social worlds are imagined, contested and redefined. Genres, as Frow says, are forms of life, and this is what Austen has done best, like changing forms of life into a mirror that could show her what her world could be and what it could not do (Austen, 2006, p. 2).

4.3. Intertextuality and Transformation

In the theoretical framework by John Frow, the axis upon which genre functionality is discerned is intertextuality. He assumes that genres cannot be imagined in a vacuum, rather, they are intertextual systems which develop in terms of interaction, adaptation and change. As explained by Frow, genres represent overlapping, merging and intersecting each other; they are constantly in a state of flux, continuously being redefined (Frow 2006, p. 25). This conception places every text in a mesh of literary, historical, and cultural relations that together more or less determine the structural set up and semantic purpose of the text. This dynamic interchange is epitomized in *Pride and Prejudice* (Austen 1813) which combines the sentimental novel, conduct literature, and the comedy of manners to create a unique narrative voice that conforms to and defies the established conventions.

Emotional sincerity, virtue and moral education via affective experience were foreshadowed by the eighteenth-century sentimental novel exemplified by such writers as Samuel Richardson and Laurence Sterne. This moral emphatic is inherited by Austen but re-created by irony and realism. As an example, the path of Elizabeth Bennet prefigures moral self-consciousness compared to her uncontrolled emotionalism (Ch. 34-36). The epistolary message by Darcy to Elizabeth (Ch.35) serves as a break in rational thought and not an expressive burst of sentimentality and thus redefines emotional growth in terms of moral thinking. Thus, by so doing, Austen adapts sentimental mode to the socio-intellectual environment of the early nineteenth

century in England, thus demonstrating the claim by Frow that genres are never fixed, but that they constantly are reconfigured in interaction with the precedent genres (Frow 2006).

Her intertextual innovation is further supported by the fact that Austen was also active as a reader of conduct literature. Female behavior was already codified in texts like *Jane Eyre* by James Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women* (1766) and Hannah More, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799). In *Pride and Prejudice*, such figures as Mary Bennett and Mr. Collins are representatives of the stern moralism and insubstantial decency preached by such texts (Ch. 7, 22), but Elizabeth opposes and even bargains with such social codes through wit, intelligence and autonomy (Ch. 19, 34). With prescriptive moral speech being turned into a story of individual agency, Austen illustrates how genre can serve as a space of ideological struggle, recalibrating inherited conventions to suit individual agency (Frow 2006).

Austen is also guided by the comedy of manners, which was practiced by Restoration playwrights like William Congreve and later authors of the eighteenth century like Richard Sheridan. The novel embraces the norms such as humorous dialogue, courtship, and the revelation of social hypocrisy. The conversation of Elizabeth with Darcy at Netherfield and Rosings Park (Ch. 7-10, 56) is a typical example of this comedy. However, Austen shifts the focus of satire away to the aspect of moral thinking and uses the element of irony to reveal the internal blemishes of pride, prejudice, and self-deception instead of just criticizing social performance. This hybridization allows Austen to turn the comic genre into an ethical form of self-exploration, combining humor with psychological and social commentary.

The use of free indirect discourse and Austen speaking voice is also another manifestation of intertextual transformation. The alternation of empathy and criticism produced by fusing the objectivity of realism with the subjectivity of sentimental fiction is achieved by combining both the narrator and character perspective (Ch. 6, 34, 36). As an instance, both individual misevaluation and general commentary on social matters can be seen in the inner monologue about Darcy proposal (Ch. 34), thus, demonstrating the text as a moral satire, love story, and psychological realism. The concept of Frow that genres overlap and interpenetrate is exactly that (Frow 2006, p. 25) becomes realized because of the abilities of Austen to synthesize several traditions in a unified and creative one.

In these intertextual interactions, *Pride and Prejudice* inherits as well as reinvents the literary field of its time. Austen makes no effort to avoid the past genres; she redefines them to suit a new emerging moral and intellectual feeling. Dancing, proposing, meeting (Ch. 3-5, 7-10, 35) recurring motifs are already recognizable generic characteristics, but also places of revelation and moral thinking. This fluidity exemplifies the point made by Frow that genre is historically fluid, and is endlessly negotiable, as an author reacts to social and cultural change. The enduring popularity of the novel, which can be accredited to the various literary sequels, adaptations, and critical interest, testifies to its ability to work in between genres and centuries, thus bringing to the fore that dynamic relationship between convention and innovation (Frow 2006).

Overall, the Austenian novel *Pride and Prejudice* is representative of the theory of intertextuality and transformation developed by Frow, in that it shows that genres are dynamic and fluid and are not pre-set categories in culture. With the help of sentimental fiction, conduct literature, and the comedy of manners, Austen, negotiating the inherited conventions, makes her text both a celebration and an invention of the literary tradition. The novel is therefore exemplary in understanding the operation of genre historically, socially, and artistically to give meaning through the creative transformation of the forms that come before it.

4.4. Genre and Power

The concept of genre introduced by John Frow is conceptualized not merely as a system of meaning but also as a system of power, the system that organizes cultural production and social relations. As he argues, genres are not an empty category but rather the structuring of knowledge that determines the formation of texts, their interpretation and appreciation (Frow, 2006, p. 10). Genre in this way establishes the powers of who can speak, what can be said, and whose voice can be legitimized within a cultural structure. This is demonstrated in *Pride and Prejudice* (Austen, 1813), which interacts with class, gender and social etiquette hierarchies and indirectly criticizes the frameworks that perpetuate them. The way that Austen plays around with the novel of manners genre reflects not only the social stratifications of early nineteenth century England but also reveals the ideological purposes behind literary structure.

The novel of manners is based on illustration of social propriety, which determines good manners and status by acting and relating with people. Patriarchal power structures are manifested in the roles of women which were limited to marriage and household chores. Nonetheless, Austen prefigures the female subjectivity, giving Elizabeth Bennet independence and critical thinking. Her rejecting of the marriage offer by Mr. Collins (Ch. 19) is a direct rebelliousness against the economic determinism

of the typical courtship patterns, with her values of personal integrity and moral judgement taking the place of the social reward. Such renegotiation of the marriage plot reveals that genre can also be a way of negotiating power and thus, Austen has her heroine to exercise intellectual and moral agency within the constraining social conventions (Frow, 2006).

Frow then goes on to state that genre serves as a form of social control with expectation which influences both the narrative and the perception of the reader. The traditions of a romantic comedy: misconceptions, egoistic lovers, and reconciliation are familiar with *Pride and Prejudice* in its initial stages, and the reader is used to the following pattern. Austen, however, makes these expectations more complex by revealing the social implications of pride, prejudice, and class consciousness. The examples of Lady Catherine de Bourgh and Caroline Bingley can be discussed as the representatives of social authority who follow the norms of their classes (Ch. 5657), and yet the irony of Austen helps to reveal the emptiness and the lack of morality behind their acts. Contrastingly, Elizabeth has moral insight and a sense of wit that makes her the ethical center of the story redefining social and literary order, and how the genre mediates power relations (Frow, 2006).

The discursive power of Austen through her narrative voice is another location as well, emerging because of genre and ideology. The ironic distance and piece of moralizing narrator help the reader to take a critical look at social conventions. Aligning narrative authority with that of Elizabeth, Austen compromises figures of patriarchy like Mr. Collins and Lady Catherine, putting them to the eye of reason (Ch.19, 56). This way female consciousness is turned into a source of power, which is evidence that literary form can reassign interpretive and ethical power in the fictional world. This discursive approach is like the fact that, as pointed out by Frow, genre determines the hierarchies of texts and social orders, determining what may be said and who may be a speaker (Frow, 2006, p. 17).

The genre and social structure also interact, which further demonstrates how the power in the story by Austen was systemic. Working within the guidelines of domestically oriented fiction and at the same time exposing its flaws, Austen illustrates how the literary genres reflect and reproduce the cultural hierarchies. The subversion of the marriage plot, whereby the plot has served as a means of economic or social conformity, to a plot that focuses on ethical judgement and mutual respect, is an example of how genre can be applied to ideological conformity. Austen transforms generic conventions into power negotiating instruments and proves that literary form can disrupt the social status quo.

Lastly, the *Pride and Prejudice* by Austen can serve as a good example of *Pride and Prejudice*, as it is a rather dynamic genre and not a passive store of meaning, as opposed to what Frow means by this statement. The redefinition of the novel of manners in making female intelligence, moral contemplation, and moral agency the focus, Austen provides the interpretative power to her heroine, undermining patriarchal and hierarchical relations by class. The novel then functions as an exploration of power per se - a restructuring of society, a moral repositioning of it, through narrative form. By so doing, Austen substantiates the main argument of Frow that genres are not purely textual categories, but the actual forms according to which culture sets its sense of order, hierarchy, and identity.

4.5. Genre and Interpretation

John Frow claims that genre is an interpretative system, which determines how readers see, expect and comprehend a text. Frow explains that, to read a text as a genre is to read that text as a set of expectations (Frow, 2006, p. 75). When reading *Pride and Prejudice* (Austen, 1813), the reader is usually enticed to the work of literature by anticipating the norms of a romantic story: a courtship story, moral teachings, social satire, and an ultimately fulfilling ending in the shape of a marriage. These anticipations create a horizon of interpretation, which helps readers to follow the developing events and at the same time gives a framework within which Austen can be creative and disruptive of norms.

Irony, misjudgment, and moral development are some of the techniques that Austen masterfully employs to control the expectations of the readers. The plot of the novel is created in a way that provokes the reader to reflect and self-evaluate. As an example, the numerous misjudgments of Elizabeth Bennet, especially her first impression of Darcy as arrogant and unworthy of respect, leave the readers with the task of re-evaluating their own judgement as well (Austen, 1813, Ch. 34). On the same note, the pride and reserve of social intercourse that Darcy displays fool Elizabeth and the reader alike, creating a clash of anticipation and the actual that underscores the nature of character and societal rules. Such devices illustrate the idea that genre structures proposed by Frow since the romantic and domestic codes of the novel establish a recognizable pattern that Austen cleverly disrupts to generate reflection and the moral experience.

A moral, social aspect of interpretation is also core in Austen and the work with genre. The novel makes the reader evaluate the characters based on their moral attributes not just on their social status and marital status. As it can be seen, the conflict

between Lydia Bennet and her disruptive behavior, which endangers the reputation of her family, and Elizabeth and her sense of judgment and discernment, which directs the story, illustrates that genre expectations include not just the resolution of the plot, but also the morality (Austen, 1813, Ch. 50). Incorporating these ethical considerations into the generic structure, Austen makes the romance appear rather didactic, as it helps the readers reach the ethical interpretation of pride, prejudice, and social behavior.

Intertextuality also enhances possibilities of interpretation. The students already familiar with the earlier novels of manners or sentimental novels can understand how Austen picks up and varies conventions, in particular the focus on propriety, courtship, and social observation. As an example, the conflict between personal needs of Elizabeth and norms of society is like the disagreements in Richardson's **Pamela or Burney Evelina*; Austen ends up resolving these contradictions by means of irony and social realism instead of being too moralizing (Austen, 1813, Ch. 19). This interaction shows that genre does not only shape reading anticipations but also helps people to engage in a subtle reading of the text, where people are able to value both continuity and novelty in literary traditions. Lastly, the use of narrative voice and free-indirect discourse by Austen determines the way things are interpreted in that she incorporates the voices of both narrator and character, inviting readers to the mind of Elizabeth, without denying the author commentary. This duality enables the readers to be in the subjective world of Elizabeth and at the same time to acknowledge social commentary that is in the text. This practice is a good example of how genre can be used as an interpretive tool: genre provides the reader with the means to find their way, interpret and criticize the textual and social meaning (Frow, 2006, p. 75). Genre helps to see how, through the prism of genre, *Pride and Prejudice* is not only a romance but also a place of intellectual involvement, where the narrative expectations are negotiated, the moral reflection promoted, and the interpretative abilities of the readers mobilized. The use of the manipulation of genre as shown in *Pride and Prejudice* by Austen provides an illustration of how expectations related to romantic and domestic fiction are used to guide understanding but allow innovative subversion. The novel refigures generic conventions as tools of moral and ethical commentary and attests to the validity of this claim by Frow by emphasizing how genre-based reading can accomplish both understanding and critical assessment (Frow, 2006; Austen, 1813).

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this research establishes that *Pride and Prejudice* reflect genre as a social practice by functioning as both a product and critique of the social institutions of its time, embodying Frow's conception of genre as "a form of life." Through the conventions of the domestic realist and romantic novel, Austen portrays social hierarchies, gender expectations, and moral values that structure early nineteenth-century English society, while simultaneously subverting them through Elizabeth Bennet's assertion of intellect, moral autonomy, and emotional authenticity. The novel thus demonstrates how genre operates as a cultural framework that shapes, regulates, and contests social behavior. Moreover, Austen's blending of romance, realism, sentimental fiction, and the comedy of manners exemplifies Frow's idea of genre as an evolving system — one that constantly merges, adapts, and transforms across historical and cultural contexts. By reworking inherited literary conventions into a narrative of ethical and intellectual growth, *Pride and Prejudice* illustrates that genre is not a fixed category but a dynamic, interpretive, and ideological process that continually generates new meanings. Ultimately, the study concludes that Austen's novel not only participates in but also redefines its generic traditions, affirming Frow's view of genre as a living, social, and ever-evolving system of meaning

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